



# THE BOUNDARY MARKER

The newsletter of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission

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## LOWER RIO GRANDE OFFICE TACKLES HIGH-PROFILE ISSUES

The Lower Rio Grande Projects Office of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has played a key role in addressing recent conditions affecting the Rio Grande. Issues such as habitat enhancement, Mexico's water deficit, aquatic weeds, and a sandbar plugging the river's mouth have posed special challenges of late. Throughout, the USIBWC has been at the forefront.

"In addition to our normal work load, the issues that have come up in recent years have kept us busy, requiring our constant involvement," said USIBWC Project Manager Rick Reyes.

The main responsibility of the 47 employees at the Mercedes, Texas office is maintenance of the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project. The U.S. portion of the project has 270 miles of levee, 30,000 acres of interior floodway, and hundreds of drains and irrigation structures. Additionally, the U.S. and Mexican Sections jointly operate two diversion dams.

Over the past decade, the office has come under scrutiny from environmentalists and property owners who often have differing perspectives on the proper balance between habitat considerations and flood control responsibilities. The USIBWC is currently studying alternatives to determine where wildlife habitat can be allowed to flourish without creating a flood risk. Agency contractors are developing

realty maps for areas where the purchase of easements may be required to achieve this balance. The IBWC is also coordinating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Valley Water Committee to identify potential funding for purchasing easements.

The project office has also been an important liaison with local water agencies and irrigators concerned about Mexico's deficit in water deliveries under the 1944 Water Treaty.

The deficit has harmed Texas farmers who rely on that water. Negotiations are underway with Mexico to address the deficit.

Another problem is the proliferation of exotic weeds in the river. Water users complain about the need to use extra water to push through the weeds to get to water intake structures. The IBWC has played a key role in brokering a binational response involving mechanical

harvesting, herbicides, and biological controls.

Last year, a new concern arose when a sandbar blocked the Rio Grande at its mouth, cutting it off from the sea. Although recent rains have reopened the mouth, the USIBWC continues to study possible long-term solutions. Additionally, the USIBWC expects to receive a permit in the near future to maintain the river's path to the sea on an as-needed basis.

As population growth continues to affect the area, the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Projects Office will be ready to respond to the new challenges.



*Aquatic weeds in Rio Grande near Brownsville*



## NEW DIVISION SEEKS TO BOOST AGENCY EFFICIENCY

A recent reorganization of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission established the Program and Project Management Division (PPMD) to improve the way the agency manages its activities.

The establishment of the PPMD reflects the interest of USIBWC Commissioner Carlos M. Ramirez in implementing a systematic approach to the agency's program and project management. With numerous activities along the 2,000-mile long boundary involving various IBWC offices and organizational units, Commissioner Ramirez saw the need to manage these projects more effectively.

The goals and objectives of the PPMD are to:

- \* Develop a standardized method for managing all USIBWC programs and projects.
- \* Minimize delays in completing projects and having to perform re-work.
- \* Minimize bottlenecks in areas that have the potential to delay the progress of projects.
- \* Develop a system which supports the Strategic Plan, Government Performance and Results Act, and

the agency's budget request process.

\* Minimize the agency budget carry over to facilitate adequate funding for new projects.

"By establishing a systematic approach for program and project management, the agency will be able to set priorities and meet deadlines much better than in the past," said Commissioner Ramirez.

The program and project management process focuses on coordinated teamwork of staff from various offices and divisions. The Technical Planning Division will play a key role in early planning and studies, coordination with executive management staff in establishing agency priorities, and requesting agency program and project budgets. The new management system will include plans that carefully consider resource needs, budget requirements, and schedules.

Initial priorities for the division include management of wastewater projects in San Diego and Nogales where complex issues and tens of millions of dollars are involved.



*PPMD staff Jose Nuñez, Larry Stout, Mike Evans (standing l to r), Liz Gandara*

## STATE DEPARTMENT HONORS IBWC EMPLOYEE

The U.S. Department of State has honored USIBWC Secretary Manuel R. "Bob" Ybarra with its Superior Honor Award. Mary Brandt, the USIBWC liaison at the State Department, presented the award at the agency's annual manager's meeting in San Diego in November.

Ybarra, a 27-

### Superior Honor Award Manuel R. Ybarra

In recognition of sustained outstanding performance during his over twenty-six years of service with the International Boundary and Water Commission, during which time Secretary Ybarra has worked tirelessly toward the improvement of U.S.-Mexican foreign relations in the border region. Secretary Ybarra has provided crucial leadership and served with extraordinary distinction throughout a career in which he has consistently demonstrated keen political acumen, exceptional technical expertise and superior diplomatic skills. As the principal Foreign Affairs Adviser to four United States Commissioners and chief architect to over fifty-one international agreements with Mexico, Secretary Ybarra has played a critical role in furthering the mission of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and has made an invaluable contribution toward the advancement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives.

year employee of the USIBWC, has headed the agency's Foreign Affairs Office since 1977. He was recognized for outstanding performance during his tenure at the agency.

The award was signed by Assistant Secretary of State Otto J. Reich.



## AGENCY BEEFS UP SECURITY AT KEY INSTALLATIONS

With the renewed focus on national security and terrorism preparedness, the USIBWC has taken steps to review and improve the security of its dams, wastewater treatment plants, and offices.

The agency implemented new security procedures shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks

in New York and Washington, such as increasing patrols at its facilities. Access to the agency's Headquarters in El Paso has become more restricted. The agency is also implementing a more aggressive emergency management plan and procedures to include evacuation drills.

To improve security at the Commission's wastewater treatment plants in San Diego and Nogales, the agency has acquired a computer-based risk assessment program. Through the program, the agency is reviewing the vulnerability of various systems at the wastewater treatment plants so that any necessary security enhancements can be implemented.

The basic physical protection system at the plants includes tools for detection, such as alarms and



*Officer Ray Gonzales provides security at HQ*

security officers; methods of delay, such as fences and locks; and methods of response, such as installation of backup systems or assistance from public safety agencies.

The USIBWC is also addressing the security of its two major dams -- Falcon Dam in Falcon Heights, Texas and Amistad Dam near Del Rio, Texas. These dams store water for downstream farms and cities, provide protection from floods, and generate electricity.

The dam security project is being carried out with the help of computer software known as RAM-D or Risk Assessment Methodology-Dams. Staff from Headquarters and the two dam offices have been undergoing training on dam safety and security issues.

Aside from sporadic vandalism, the occasional unstable visitor, and even rarer bomb threats, USIBWC facilities have faced few security threats over the years. By constantly reviewing security, the USIBWC will be prepared for any new threats that may arise.



*Amistad Dam*

## PROMOTIONS AND NEW HIRES

Congratulations to recently-promoted USIBWC staff:

Wayne Belzer.....	HQ Environmental Management
Daniel Borunda.....	HQ Environmental Management
Efren Carrera.....	Falcon
Doug Echlin.....	HQ Environmental Management
Gregory Estock.....	Nogales
Jose L. Garcia.....	American Dam
Luis Garcia.....	Falcon
Franklin Lazo.....	Mercedes
Kenneth Mallery.....	Nogales
Eulogio Mendoza.....	Amistad
Jessica Nuñez.....	Presidio
Roque Reyes.....	Falcon
Mary Rodriguez.....	HQ Water Accounting
Cheryl Snover.....	HQ Information Management
Angel Sosa.....	Falcon
James Walker.....	HQ Finance

The USIBWC also welcomed the following new employees to staff:

Edie Adkins.....	HQ Technical Planning
Susan Daniel.....	HQ Legal
William Finn.....	HQ Engineering Services
Elizabeth Gandara.....	HQ Program and Project Management
Jesus Garza.....	Las Cruces
Martin Hinojos.....	Las Cruces
Edward Makarewicz.....	Las Cruces
Luz Marquez.....	Zacarias Dominguez
Sandra Martinez.....	HQ Water Accounting
Tania Orellana.....	Zacarias Dominguez
Martha Santos.....	HQ Operations
Daniel Toole.....	HQ Occupational Safety and Health
Elias Vasquez.....	Zacarias Dominguez

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